

TWO PIECES  
ON  
CLASS STRUGGLE  
IN THE  
U.S.A.

The two articles reproduced here are: 1) James Boggs, "The Rise and Fall of the Union," ~~is~~ the first chapter of his book, The American Revolution: Pages from a Negro Worker's Notebook (Monthly Review Press, 1963), and 2) Guido Baldi, "Theses on Mass Worker and Social Capital," ~~is~~ translated and published in Radical America, VI, 3 (May-June 1972).

They are reproduced together because each provides the historical and theoretical basis for determining the strategic articulation of the American working class movement. They are able to do this because they provide the criteria for locating the historical phases of the class struggle. Neither was written (nor are they reproduced here) for the purpose of contributing to an academic discussion of "Labor History" or "Economic History." Each has developed from concrete struggle and in some respects each has anticipated theoretically actual revolutionary practise. Their political hypotheses and methodological guidelines act as a critique of the impasse of the Marxist Left which has separated the "political" from the "economic" struggle, and production (the workers) from circulation (the consumers, the 'public'). These separations, in turn, have produced the oppositions between Voluntarism and Determinism, and Humanism and Economism, whose American political expressions are found in the 'sects' on the one hand and the 'Movement' on the other. They also explain why communism is on the order of the day, and they anticipate the slogan, "Struggle Against Labor."

James Boggs

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE UNION ..... 4

Guido Baldi

THESES ON MASS WORKER AND SOCIAL CAPITAL ..... 18

In the last twenty years an industrial revolution has been taking place in the United States at a pace faster than that of any country in the world, transforming social layers of this country on a scale never before dreamed of. So fast has this industrial revolution been developing that 60% of the jobs held by the working population today did not even exist during the First World War, while 70% of the jobs that existed in this country in 1900 don't exist today. Not only have work classifications been fundamentally altered, but the work force has multiplied from 20 million in 1900 to 40 million in 1944 to 68 million today. The change is not only in numbers. Over 20 million of those working today are women, and by 1970 it is expected that women workers will have increased to 30,000,000 - a work force of women which will be one-and-a-half times the entire work force of 1900.

The United States has transformed itself so rapidly from an agricultural country to an industrial country, and as an industrial country has undergone such rapid industrial revolutions that the question of who is in what class becomes an ever-wider and more complicated question. Today's member of the middle class is the son or daughter of yesterday's worker.

When I was a child, my mother's chief ambition was to learn how to read and write, because if she had been able to read and write she could have become a first-class cook for some rich white people. That, for her, would have been success and the realization of what was, for her and in her day, a high ambition. Her ambition for me was that I should obtain an education so that I would not have to do the things she had to do. In America, more than in any other country, the revolutions in the mode of production have been accompanied by changes in the composition and status of classes. Today most workers in the plant have been to high school and quite a few have even been to college. All either plan or wish to send their sons and daughters to college - their sons so they won't have to work in the factory on what they call a dull and automated job; their daughters (get this!) so that they won't have to marry some bum but can make their own living and be free to decide whether they want to marry or not marry, unhampered as they have been in the years gone by, when the big aim was to raise a girl so that she'd be able to meet and marry a good hard-working man who would provide for her and the children.

America is therefore at the stage where no class is a homogeneous segregated bloc as in the early days in Europe when, fresh out of feudalism, everything was controlled by a few large owners of estates and factories, while the rest of the population were the direct servants of the ruling class, whatever the form in which they worked for it. Nor is it like the United States in the period before the Civil War when, in the South, you had the big landowners with millions of slaves watched over by a few straw bosses, while in the North you had craftsmen in small shops, farmers, and textile millworkers. Nor is it like the 1920's when the farms were being mechanized and the rural population was pouring into the big cities to man the machines and the assembly lines of the mass production industries that had grown up since the First World War.

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In the 1930's with the country in a deep economic crisis the old craft unions went into a state of decline, and people in panic and disillusionment began to create new forms of organization. They were spurred on by an administration which called itself the New Deal and which, in order to save the country from total collapse, initiated certain reforms, thereby creating an arena in which the people could act. This led to a wave of further social reforms and the birth of the CIO which at that point was the biggest social reform movement that had ever taken place in America. Radical groupings for the first time had a mass force in action within which they could propagate and agitate for their theories and ideas, ideas which were predominantly based on European concepts of organization, and on Marx's, Lenin's, and Trotsky's theory of the class struggle. Thousands of young intellectuals, most of them the sons and daughters of European immigrants, began to take part in and become part of the labor movement. At that time the validity of their approach was strengthened by the fact that the bulk of the American workers were still "raw workers" and not at all articulate - sharecroppers, auto workers, textile workers, rubber workers.

What has transpired since then? The sons of the factory workers and coal miners have become teachers, engineers, draftsmen, scientists, social workers. In fact today, even the radicals no longer think of their children replacing them on the assembly line, or with the pick and shovel in the coal mine, or behind the tractor. Today the largest bulk of organized workers in this country is made up of truckers, dispatchers, etc., in the transport industries. The other large bulk, mainly unorganized, is composed of teachers. There is a growing army of technicians and engineers who today have the same status in industry as did the plumbers, carpenters, and skilled workers in yesterday's industries. That is all they are, nothing more, nothing less.

Even in the South this transformation is taking place and not only among whites but among Negroes. There are many tens of thousands of Negro youths in the colleges today, and they are the ones leading the freedom struggles in the South. They are the sons of ex-GIs, men who have worked in the steel mills, on railroads, in factories, in the mines, but are determined that their children shall not follow in their footsteps.

Today the working class is so dispersed and transformed by the very nature of the changes in production that it is almost impossible to select out any single bloc of workers as working class in the old sense. Today something like 15 percent of industrial employment is in war industry - in the production of missiles, tanks, guns, rockets - and the men and women in these industries hold all kinds of positions. Some of these positions in years gone by would have classified them as middle class; some make salaries that exceed those of the executives in some corporations. The sons and daughters of yesterday's ditch-diggers are today's engineers, scientists, tool-makers, electronic specialists, nuclear physicists, school teachers, social workers, time-study men, cost-analysis experts, laboratory technicians, hospital nurses, secretaries to big executives, as well as typists, file clerks, dictaphone operators. Only the mothers and fathers are still left in those jobs which were once considered the testing ground of the pure working class. And each year these pure working-class jobs become fewer and fewer as

automation moves in and takes over.

However, it is not only diversification of work that has changed the working class. The working class is growing, as Marx predicted, but it is not the old working class which the radicals persist in believing will create the revolution and establish control over production. That old working class is the vanishing herd. There are only 12 million of these production workers left in American industry, out of a total work force of 68 million. Moreover, since the Negroes were the last hired into these bottom jobs, over 30 percent of these 12 million production workers (or about 4 million) are Negroes. So the Negroes, whom the radicals do not ordinarily think of as workers, form a large proportion of this working-class force which is usually considered as the revolutionary force, while the native-born whites who have been able to move up with every change in production are less and less inside the working-class force.

By examining the history of the CIO, the industrial revolution, and unemployment, we can get some idea of the revolutionary changes that have so rapidly developed in America, directly leading to changes in the nature of work, the social composition of various strata of the population, the classes within it, and the culture of the population.

The CIO came in the 1930s. It came when the United States, which had fought in the war of 1917 and built up large-scale industry out of the technological advances of that war, was in a state of economic collapse, with over 12 million unemployed. The workers in the plant began to organize in the underground fashion which such a movement always takes before a great social reform - in the cellars, the bars, the garages; in the same way that the Abolitionists had to organize - a minority against the sentiments of the community. Involved in getting the movement under way were Communists, Socialists, wobblies, radicals of every type, along with preachers and a new layer of militant workers. Sitdown strikes erupted all over the country. All auto workers except those of Ford were involved, and the movement spread to allied industries.

To grasp the social significance of the CIO it must be clearly understood that the workers in taking hold in the plants did not take power. They only took hold of the plants. They did not take over the state government, or the national government, or the city police, or the National Guard, or the army. But in their struggles with the police and often with state troopers, they mobilized that section of the population which was not directly involved but which felt it also had a stake in the struggle. People from all strata of the population began to support these struggles centering around the workers and often to participate in them, both physically and financially.

It should also be clearly understood that all the workers did not act as one, nor did they all sit down as one, nor did they all join the movement as one. When the sitdown movement began in the shops, some workers stayed in while others went home and waited to see how it would all come out. The great Ford plant in River Rouge, where more workers were concentrated than in any other plant in the country, did not erupt at all. It was only four years later, in 1941, that the Ford

Motor Company was brought into the union. It is necessary to realize that more workers were organized into the union than themselves spontaneously organized the union. The struggle for the union was also the battle against scabs. There were workers who had to be forced to join by those who had seen and felt the benefits of this great social organization.

From 1935 to the entry of the United States into the war in 1941, we saw in this country the greatest period of industrial strife and workers' struggle for control of production that the United States has ever known. We saw more people than ever before become involved and interested in the labor movement as a social movement. Those who worked in the plants under a new Magna Carta of labor, the great Wagner Act, not only had a new outlood where their own lives were concerned. They also had the power to intimidate management, from the foremen up to the top echelons, forcing them to yield to workers' demands whenever production standards were in dispute. When management did not yield, the workers pulled the switches and shut down production until it did yield. So extensive was their control of production that they forced management to hire thousands and thousands of workers who would not otherwise have been hired. Yet it should be remembered that even at this point, at the height of its greatest power at the point of production, the CIO never solved the question of unemployment. It took the Second World War to put back to work the millions who had been unemployed throughout the 1930s. At the height of CIO power we had more unemployed than we do now, both absolutely and proportionately.

The first serious contest of the CIO came in 1938 and it expressed itself in contractual language in 1939. That was when the union agreed with management to outlaw sitdowns inside the plants. The workers, not to be outdone by the union contract, quickly devised a new way which would later prove to be the path of opposition to both union and management. They began to walk out without union authorization. In 1939 and 1940, with the shadows of war hovering over Europe, the contract stated that the union would not cause or instigate sitdowns or walkouts in the plants. The NLRB was set up in Washington and then, following Pearl Harbor, the War Labor Board. The union leaders gave the government the no-strike pledge, and there followed one of the biggest debates that has ever taken place in the union over the question of whether or not the unions should abide by this pledge. Although thousands and thousands of militant workers, realizing that their newly won freedoms were being curbed, put up a protest, the CIO and all the other unions except the miners' succumbed. But throughout the war, the workers continued to wildcat over production, even though many had sons in the armed forces. It was here also that the union leaders began to use other forces from outside the unions, including members of the War Labor Board, to persuade workers to return to work for the sake of the war effort.

However, in the flux of the Second World War, the workers created inside the plants a life and a form of sociability higher than has ever been achieved by man in industrial society. For one thing, the war meant the entry into the plants of women workers, Negro workers, Southern workers, and people

from all strata, including professors, artists, and radicals who would never have entered the plant before, either because of their race, sex, social status, or radical background. With the war going on, you had a social melting pot in the plant, a sharing of different social, political, cultural, and regional experiences and backgrounds.

Side by side with what was taking place in the shop there was also growing up the union organization and what is today the union bureaucracy. With only one problem at hand to keep the workers at work - the labor leaders began to sense their power. Yesterday workers at the bench, they now sat at the table with management and with representatives from Washington. If in Washington, on the top level, Roosevelt was clearing things with Sidney, and vice versa, on the local level labor leaders with thousands of workers under their control were also feeling their oats. These labor leaders often used the radical intellectuals as advisers in strategy and tactics. They found these radicals useful in presenting a militant face to the workers. On the eve of the war, the union bureaucracy received the union shop contract which required every worker in the plant to become a member of the union. For the first time the political machine of a plant was organized by the union itself, and the company set up private rooms in the plant for union officials.

Throughout the war period the workers continued to defy the union on its no-strike pledge to the government. Thousands upon thousands of unauthorized strikes took place. (In 1943 and 1944 alone, there were 8,708 strikes involving 4 million workers.) These strikes took place over such issues as the right to smoke a cigarette (the companies for the first time were forced to allow workers in the big plants to smoke so that tobacco chewing was no longer necessary); the right of management to fire guys who were accused of sleeping on the job, or who laid off too much, or who didn't keep up with production; the right to eat on the job, read on the job, and even to cook on the job. Although workers officially had no right to strike, they achieved by these unauthorized strikes such human rights in the shop as to give them the ability to utilize their talents as never before and the opportunity to develop such an understanding of production as no group of workers in history has ever had the leisure to acquire. With the War Labor Board settling the matter of wages, the union leadership spent most of its time at the bargaining table trying to finagle job classifications which would bring a few cents more, hoping thereby to prove to the workers that they were doing something. It was only the miners union under John L. Lewis which officially took any position with regard to workers' rights during the war. It did this by calling the only strike of national significance, the strike which brought into the labor movement the "No Contract, No Work" slogan.

It made little difference to management, which was making record profits through the government's cost-plus contracts, how many hours workers worked or even how many workers were on the payroll. So corrupt were both union and management that a government study at Packard Motor Company revealed hundreds of workers sitting around and gambling while others worked. The workers were frozen on the job and

had no way to leave unless they could harass management into firing them. So some of the more ingenious workers carried on individual wildcats, refusing to work in order to be fired, whereupon they would go to another plant for a few cents more. In this way many workers moved from job to job and saw the inside workings of many plants.

Then as suddenly as had come the war, came V-J Day. An era had ended and a new era inside the union movement began. The control of production and the human relations inside the plant which the workers had achieved were now shunted aside by the union. The struggle was shifted from the plane of relations on the job to the economic plane, where it had never been up to then. For although the coming of the CIO had meant wage increases for most workers, these increases had not been big. The average wage in the plants throughout the war was \$1.00-\$1.25 an hour. It was the long hours of work which made the paychecks big enough to meet the black market prices and the rising cost of living.

The great General Motors strike of 1945-1946 was the opening gun in the new vicious circle in which wage increases and fringe benefits would be won by the union and hailed as great social progress, only to be followed by concession of some part of the control over production which the workers had won. But flushed with the freedom they had gained inside the shop during the war, the workers almost unanimously supported the early postwar strikes for economic benefits. It was not until 1948 when the union gave management the 'security clause,' handing over the right to run production as it saw fit, that dissension began to spread.

Reuther had come to power in 1947 and with him a new kind of labor statesmanship which was to set a pattern for the whole CIO. Riding the crest of popularity of his "Open the Books" slogan (which he had raised as director of the 1945-46 GM strike), Reuther pushed aside all the militants and radicals who in the sitdowns and during the war had built the UAW up into a model for the CIO. The historic escalator clause which the Trotskyites had projected and GM had rejected in 1946 was now accepted by GM. A new pattern of a sliding scale of wages was adopted which became the foundation of the union's "Sliding Scale of Socialism" strategy. The year 1948 also saw the further development of the union's Political Action Committee, whereby the schemers of the Reuther bureaucracy and the CIO leadership in general hoped to take the militancy away from the shop and focus it on the halls of Congress - to do through legislation what the workers had not done through the sitdowns, exercise political power.

In 1950 the UAW launched its historic pension scheme, and the 117-day Chrysler strike took place. In the contract which emerged from this strike, Reuther (to use one of his favorite phrases) "nailed down" a scheme for the workers to get pensions and holiday pay. It was with this contract that the workers began to realize how nailed down they really were to the company and how they were being made part of it. The contract evoked from the workers, particularly the younger ones who were unable to see any benefits for themselves in the pension schemes, the first serious opposition from the ranks. The pension pattern quickly spread to other unions. Again the UAW had

established itself as the model for the labor movement.

But 1950 also brought something else - the 5-year contract. GM hailed it as a guarantee of five years of industrial peace. From the workers' standpoint it was the beginning of the stalemate, and a rash of wildcats began which were to continue until the expiration of this contract and even up to the expiration of the next contract, in 1958. During these eight years, from 1950 to 1958, the workers used the wildcat as a defensive weapon to fight off encroachment on their control at the point of production, while the companies gradually wore them down with the help of the union.

During this period, management's strength began to assert itself in conjunction with the Republican administration in Washington. The economic pace of the country was beginning to slow down as Truman's "police action" in Korea was being brought to an end. But the United States was still moving from a welfare state to a warfare state: the Cold War was on, the McCarthy era was here, and the radicals and militants were on the run, pushed out by Reuther's insistence that all opponents were "parlor pinks." The Taft-Hartley Act, enacted under Truman, the friend of labor, was now being enforced by Eisenhower. Merger of the AFL-CIO to centralize labor's strength was being talked about everywhere. No one said that the CIO, which represented the most radical point yet reached by labor in the United States, was no going back to join those whose only contribution to the labor movement had been the conservatism of business unionism. All that mattered now was a bigger organization. Strength was measured by size.

The wildcat movement reached its peak in 1955. In that year the Ford and GM workers, who up to that time had more or less supported the Reuther machine, believing that thereby they were supporting unionism, erupted in nation-wide wildcats while Reuther was still celebrating the "Guaranteed Annual Wage" contract (which was to turn out to be only a supplementary unemployment benefit). The wildcatters all over the country raised the slogan of "Specific Local Grievances" and forced the union to give them the right to local strikes over these grievances. For the first time Reuther and his associates were really scared. They had been warned by the workers that control of the machine was one thing and control over the workers quite another, that a contract between the union and the company is not necessarily a contract between the workers and the company.

However, a new force had now entered the picture, a force which the union had given up its claim to control when in 1948 it yielded to management the sole right to run production as it saw fit. With the decline again of auto production after the Korean War, and with the signing of the 1955 contract, management began introducing automation at a rapid rate.

Automation is a change in the mode of production which is more radical than any since the introduction of the assembly line. But unlike the assembly line, which was to increase the manufacturing work force over what it had been, automation is an advanced form of technology which replaces individual human controls with electronic controls. What had already

happened to the coal miners with the mechanization of the mines was now catching up with the CIO in chemicals, rubber, steel, glass, autos, machinery, etc.

As the companies began to step up their pressure for higher job standards from the workers, the union itself began to try to persuade the workers that automation would provide more jobs for them. Caught squarely between the union contract and the company, the workers continued to wildcat against every attempt to reduce the work force, but each time they were forced to return by the union officials. New plants with new automated machinery began to spring up all over the country. The work force in the old plants was broken up, scattered to the new plants. Thus the machine shop work which had been done by 1,800 at the old Chrysler-Jefferson plant was now being done by 596 in the new Trenton, Michigan, plant which supplies not only the old plant with machined parts but all the other plants of the corporation. Layoffs followed by the hundreds as more was being produced not only by the new automated machinery but by forcing workers to tend more of the old machines - man-o-mation. With the building into the automated machines of more controls, thus reducing or eliminating breakdowns, even skilled workers were no longer needed for repair work.

The workers wildcatted, held meetings of their locals, voted not to work overtime, all in an attempt to stem the tide. But the union continued to send them back, and so the layoffs continued, reaching into every section of the plant, and including office workers, time-keepers and paymasters. As the office workers found their places taken over by IBM machines and computers, high-heeled and self-frocked women began to join the production workers on the picket line.

Finally after 137 wildcats at US Rubber in one year and 700 wildcats in the Chrysler plants in three years the union agreed with the Company that any worker who wildcats should be first warned and then summarily dismissed. That put an end to wildcatting. Then came what was for all practical purposes the end of the union when, in 1958, under the pressure of the company and for a period of four months, the union insisted that the workers continue on the job without a contract. Meanwhile, the company introduced new work standards when and how it pleased, daring the union to strike. When the 1958 contract was finally signed, there were few workers in the plant who did not realize they had returned to fully company-controlled plants. Time-study men and work layout specialists roamed the plants like sniffing bloodhounds, spying, taking pictures, watching over the workers' shoulders, while the shamed union representatives hid behind pillars or in the toilets.

The cooling-off period which the union had devised in the 1955 strike over local grievances was now in full contract effect. After a certain number of workers' grievances had been accumulated, a strike vote could be taken. Then a 60-day wait was in order. Then, if the International Board considered the grievances worth a strike, a strike might be held, etc. Meanwhile, the company was free to keep the work standard in effect and get out all its production.

So ridiculous has the union become as a workers' organization that in 1958 when the

contract with Chrysler was being ratified on a Sunday, the union authorized the workers to take a strike vote on the next day.

Once again the workers devised a method to hit back, but this time not against the company. In December 1958 the unemployed began to picket both the plant and the union against overtime. When this happened, the union, in cooperation with the company and the courts, saw to it that a ruling was handed down that any picketing by the unemployed of a plant was in violation of the contract. Not satisfied with this outlawing of actions by its unemployed members, the union at its next convention decided that unemployed workers could only retain their membership and the right to vote if they reported to the local union during the last ten days of each month. Thus the union has itself drawn the line between the employed and the unemployed. Today unemployed workers march around the Chrysler plants protesting overtime, but the union does not allow them to do so during hours when the workers are actually going into the plant. They may only march when the workers are already inside working.

All that is now left to the workers is the picketing of the union itself.

From 1955 until today the workers have made it absolutely clear that man does not live by bread alone. They have insisted that the question of wage raises or money benefits in any form is not what concerns them but rather the conditions of work in the shop. In 1961 the union bureaucracy negotiated new contracts with the "Big Three" and American Motors. If you take the word of the workers themselves, you will see that not one of the issues that they consider the major ones was settled by the new contracts. The overtime which they insisted must go and the shorter work week they wanted have been tossed out of the window. In fact, before the ink was dry on the new contracts and before the workers had even ratified them, the plants were scheduling six days a week, ten hours a day. Not only was nothing done to improve working conditions, Management now had another three-year contract under which it can legally pursue the merciless speed-up and intimidation which have been developing since 1955. Even the small representation of stewards and committeemen which workers retained at Chrysler has been reduced. At American Motors wash-up time has been cut out. Faced with the question of unemployment and accepting it as permanent, the union has now embarked on an all-out program to ease as many workers out of the plant as possible, through severance pay, pensions, increased unemployment benefits. At the same time, it is pushing a profit-sharing plan to incorporate those still left in the plant into management itself. When American Motors workers made it clear that they didn't want the profit-sharing plan, the union manufactured a new definition of democracy: the holding of one election after another until the workers vote the way the union wants them to vote. Joining hand in hand with management, it conducted an intensive educational program to brainwash the workers into line. At General Motors, where local union after local union, with the Pittsburgh local in the lead, refused to go back to work until their local grievances had been settled, the International simply brought all dissident local officers to Detroit where, together with management



it whipped them into line. In the Chrysler set-up, where the Twinsburg, Ohio, stamping plant is the key to continued production, the International came to a settlement with the company over the unanimous opposition of the entire local bargaining committee.

The UAW is just one union among the major CIO unions. But it has been considered the most advanced, the most progressive, the model of the labor movement that arose in the 1930s. If this is what the UAW has done, it is not difficult to imagine the state of the other CIO unions which failed to reach the heights of militancy and social advancement of the UAW.

Thus, after 25 years, the UAW has given back to management every right over production won in the movement of the 1930s and the war years. Today the workers are doing in eight hours the actual physical work they used to do in twelve. At 6:30, a half hour before the day shift begins, you can see workers setting up their operations so that they will not fall behind during the hours for which they are paid. They are afraid to go to the toilet, to get a drink of water, to take time off to go to a funeral, of a relative. If they refuse to work overtime, they are written up and sent home on a regular working day. They are afraid to walk around with a newspaper in their pockets for fear that they will be accused of reading on the job. Whenever the company wishes to work the men more than 40 hours a week, all it has to do is "schedule" overtime. Here is an example of how "scheduling" works: recently a worker at one of the Chrysler plants refused to work through lunch when asked to do so by the foreman. The foreman took him to Labor Relations. The Labor Relations man asked the foreman, "Did you tell him the work was scheduled or did you just ask him to work?" The foreman replied that he had only asked the worker to work. Whereupon the Labor Relations man said, "Next time tell him the work is scheduled, and then if he refuses you can fire him because we have the sole right to schedule production as we see fit."

Anyone listening and talking to workers in the auto plants today can tell that the workers are through with the union. In the early days of the union, the most common expression in the shop was, "Now that we have a union we don't have to take a lot of the stuff that we used to take." Now the expression is, "When we had a union we didn't have to take this stuff." For over four years now it has been obvious that the workers themselves have drawn the curtain on the era of the union.

When the situation has reached such a stage, all questions of what the union should have done or could have done, or what some other leaders might have done or should have done, or what might have been achieved if some other policy had been followed - all these questions become completely irrelevant and abstract. To continue to think in such terms is to repeat the mistake that the Trotskyites made for thirty years as they tried to formulate an alternative policy and leadership for Stalin, while Stalin himself was going ahead and building not only the Russian bureaucracy but a Russia which no longer bears any resemblance to the Russia of 1917.

The end of the CIO is not necessarily due to the advent of automation, although it is automation which has made clear its helplessness. It is due to the fact that all organizations that spring up in a capitalist society and do not take absolute power, but rather fight only on one tangential or essential aspect of that society are eventually incorporated into a capitalist society. That fact, the key to the present situation, is that from the beginning the union did not take absolute control away from the capitalists. There was no revolution, no destruction of the state power. The union itself has therefore become incorporated into all the contradictions of the capitalist system and is today fulfilling the same functions for the American state as the Russian trade unions do for the Russian state.

But what about the experiences that the organized workers have had in the last 25 years and what is going to happen to the workers who were organized into the CIO, now that automation has arrived and the assembly-line system and mass production by mass production workers are coming to an end as the typical mode of production?

First of all, these workers have undoubtedly made certain very substantial gains not only for themselves but for society, as all workers have who have carried on the class struggle.

The CIO movement gave the American public its first real taste of class consciousness and social thinking, establishing in the American mind for the first time the idea of democracy on the job, in the factories, the offices, and every place where people work. The whole idea of human relations at work, which has since become the subject of innumerable studies by industrial relations experts, is the product of this movement. The CIO, in conjunction with the war and the activities of the Negroes themselves, established a framework within which Negroes could fight for equality inside the plant. It has done the same for women workers. Over the years it has provided a focal point for the energies of tens of thousands of idealistically minded young people who found in the labor movement a cause that they could serve. The theory that America has a class structure, so long disputed, was finally recognized after the CIO was organized. It was the CIO movement, and following it the Second World War, which established the production workers as a citizen of American society rather than just a beast of burden.

But the question is: What is going to happen to the workers who established these values now that automation is cutting so sharply into their ranks? What is going to happen to the steel, auto, rubber, aircraft, coal workers, who are today the vanishing herd? This is a burning question, not only to these workers themselves but to all who for so long have looked to these workers to save American society as a whole.

These workers will not just fade away, although their numbers will be constantly diminishing both relatively to the rest of the working population and absolutely as older workers die or are pensioned off and no replacements are hired. Those who remain have undergone a very rich economic experience. They are not only educated in the meaning and nature of modern production, but through this they have acquired a certain wit which they will use to evolve tactics of self-defense, prolonging their tenure as long as possible.

They have also had a very rich political experience - with the union, with management, and with the government - from which they can draw as they join other strata of the workers in the struggles which will inevitably develop as the pressure is transferred to these new workers. But above all, they have learned a great lesson for all future workers: the lesson that those in whom they put their trust to serve them have wound up as their masters. From now on these workers are going to fight these new masters every step of the way, sometimes advancing, sometimes retreating, but always antagonistic. Their fights will clarify for the new revolutionary forces what a struggle entails.

But what about all the unemployed? What will society do about them? This would be one question if we were talking about a socialist society. It is another question when we are talking about a capitalist society, which is what the United States is today. The capitalists will take care of them. The capitalists, you say? Aren't they the most inhuman people on earth? Aren't they the ones whom these workers have been fighting tooth and nail all the time?

Here is one of the greatest contradictions of capitalism itself. Today the capitalists have to feed these untouchables instead of being fed by them. Faced with an economic crisis or industrial change, as after a war or when a new mode of production is introduced or when the market is glutted with goods, the first thing the capitalists say is, "We have a cushion." What is a cushion? It is the very thing that these capitalists refused to give for so long and which the workers forced them to yield only by long and bitter struggles - social security, pensions, severance pay, unemployment benefits, supplementary unemployment benefits, charity, welfare. But the capitalists are not going to pay for these you say. You are so right. The workers have paid for them - are still pay for them.

Today over 100,000 UAW workers are on pension - the product of the new method of silent firing which the companies have devised to get rid of one set of workers without having to hire new ones. Even more coal miners, steel workers, rubber workers, iron ore workers, railway workers, have been eased out in this way. In fact the railroads have made the process clearest of all. They will hire no new firemen, they say, but those still working can continue to ride like dummies in the cabs until it is time for them to retire. In the auto shops one of the methods of silent firing involves the use of the physical rating code. Workers are required to take a physical examination each year and are coded accordingly. Any worker over 60 who cannot keep up with production is forced to retire on the basis of physical fitness. Those under 60 are laid off, draw unemployment benefits until they are exhausted, and then go on social security disability.

What about those millions of unemployed who have never been called back to work and have exhausted their compensation? Well, the government can periodically extend compensation a few weeks longer whenever it fears these unemployed may be getting desperate, and then finally there is welfare, where the bulk of them wind up. But won't this cost the state, the country, the city, the manufactures a lot of money to take care of all these people? But the people pay for that also through taxes on those still working. It is among these taxpayers that the tempo of revolt is accelerating.

What about the young people to whom the doors of industry are closed because there are no more semi-skilled jobs and because they have not been trained for the new technical jobs? There is always the mass army, the mass peacetime army which, like automation, we didn't have in the United States in earlier periods. This army, the biggest peacetime army in the world, is the modern equivalent of the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s. It is the place where a part of the unemployed youth are now regularly dumped and where periodically even some of the employed are transferred in order to make room for others to take their jobs. Only now it is not civilian, it conserves nothing, and it is paid for out of taxes of those still working and excludes the most handicapped and underprivileged - the illiterate and the physically unfit.

It is clear that this growing army of the American permanently unemployed is the ultimate crisis of the American bourgeoisie. But the American bourgeoisie is a powerful bourgeoisie, and it will take every step in its power to moderate, cajole, temper the revolution which this condition will undoubtedly provoke. It is also clear that the most organized workers in this country, the members of the unionized strata, the vanishing herd of production workers, have learned that in the actions they will take or may take from now on, they will have to be joined by other forces. Today, the problem of control over production and the solution of their specific local grievances will have to be dealt with by larger sections of the population. These are now, more than ever before, questions which require the taking on of the union, the city government, the state government, and the national government. That these workers can or may revolt is not the question. Even one worker can revolt. But workers are not fools. They want to win sometimes too, and this is true of American workers more than of any other workers in the world. When they struggle, they like to know that they can achieve some immediate success. And understanding the structure of society as they do, they know they are going to have to join with others in order to win. They will have to move on a scale of revolt powerful enough to smash the union, the company, and the state which, under the guise of national security and national defense, denounces every move they make on their own behalf as irresponsible and irreconcilable with the system itself.

Why don't they take over their own organization, their union? Looking backwards, one will find that side by side with the fight to control production, has gone the struggle to control the union, and that the decline has taken place simultaneously on both fronts. As the company regained control of production through bargaining with the union and through automation, the workers have been losing control of the union. So that just as the workers today know that they have to challenge more than the plant management for control over production, so they know that merely taking over the union today would gain them very little. Historically, workers move ahead by the new. That is, they bypass existing organizations and form new ones uncorrupted by past habits and customs. In the 1930s the workers did not take over the AFL. They formed the CIO, a new organization, adapted to the new

forms of industrial struggle. It is also significant that when the AFL and the CIO finally joined together in 1955 with the aim of strengthening the American labor movement, they did not become stronger but rather declined in numerical membership and influence. Millions of workers in the South have never been organized by the unions and never will be because the unions no longer have the social power to overcome the resistance of the Southern industrialists who control the local sheriffs, judges, police, politicians, and agents of the federal government. Millions of unemployed have been run out of the unions because they are afraid that these unemployed may explode in some action that would disrupt the cooperation between union and management. Thus with every day more people who can be classified as workers are outside the labor organizations than inside them.

## 1

The years from the beginning of the century up to the English general strike of 1926 witness this crucial new feature in class struggle: whereas deep contradictions between developed and backward areas characterize capitalism at this state and confine it to national levels of organization, the political autonomy and independence of the working class reach an international level. For the first time capital is bypassed by the workers at an international level. The first international cycle roughly 1904 to 1906 is a cycle of mass strikes which at times develops into violent actions and insurrections. In Russia, it starts with the Putilov strike and develops into the 1905 revolution. 1904 is the date of the first Italian general strike. In Germany, the spontaneous Ruhr miners' strike of 1905 on the eight-hour issue and the Amburg general strike of 1906 lead a class wave that overflows into a large network of middle-sized firms. In the US, the miners' strikes of 1901 and 1904 and the foundation of the IWW in 1905 seem to be a premonition of the struggles to come.

## 2

The second cycle starts with 1911. We see the same class vanguards initiate the struggle: in the US the vanguards are the coal miners of West Virginia, the Harriman railroad workers, and the Lawrence textile workers; in Russia they are the Lena gold miners of 1912; in Germany they are the workers of the 1912 mass strike of the Ruhr. World War I represents the occasion for the widest development of class struggle in the US (1,204 strikes in 1914; 1,593 in 1915; 3,789 in 1916; and 4,450 in 1917 - and the National Labor Board sanctions a number of victories: collective bargaining, equal pay for women, guaranteed minimum wage) while laying the groundwork for a third international cycle. Since the War has produced a boom in precision manufacturing, electrical machinery, optics, and other fields, the class weight of the superskilled workers of these sectors is enormously increased in Germany and elsewhere. They are the workers who form the backbone of the councils in the German revolution, the Soviet Republic in Bavaria, and the Italian factory occupation of 1919. By 1919, the year of the Seattle general strike, 4,160,000 workers in the US (20.2% of the entire labor force) are mobilized by the struggle. In the international circulation of struggles, Russia, the "weakest link," breaks. The capitalist nightmare comes true: the initiative of the working class establishes a "workers' state." The class that first made its appearance in the political arena in 1848 and that learned the need for political organization from its defeat of the Paris Commune is now moving in an international way. The peculiar commodity labor power, the passive, fragmented receptacle of factory exploitation is not behaving as an international political actor, the political working class.

## 3

The specific political features of these three cycles of struggle lie in the dynamics of their circulation. The struggle starts with class vanguards and only later does it circulate throughout the class and develop into mass actions. That is, the circulation of struggles follows the structure of the class composition that predominates in these years. That composition consists of a large network of sectors with diverse degrees of development, varying weight in the economy, and different levels of skill and experience. The large cleavages that characterize such a class composition (the dichotomy between a skilled 'labor aristocracy' and the mass of the unskilled is one prominent example)

necessitates the role of class vanguards as political and organizational pivots. It is through an alliance between the vanguards and the proletarian masses that class cleavages are progressively overcome and mass levels of struggles are reached. That is, the political re-composition of the working class is based on its industrial structure, the material articulation of the labor force (labor power).

## 4

The organizational experiments of the working class in these years are by necessity geared to this specific class composition. Such is the case with the Bolshevik model, the Vanguard Party. Its politics of class consciousness "from the outside" must re-compose the entire working class around the demands of its advanced sectors; its "politics of alliances" must bridge the gap between advanced workers and the masses. But such is also the case with the Councils model, whose thrust toward the self-government of production is materially bound to the figure of the skilled worker (that is, the worker with a unique, fixed, subjective relationship to tools and machinery, and with a consequent self identification as 'producer'). In Germany in particular where the machine-tool industry developed exclusively on the basis of the exceptional skill of workers, the Councils express their "managerial" ideology most clearly. It is at such a relatively high-level of professionalization - with a worker/tool relationship characterized by precise skills, control over production techniques, direct involvement with the work plan, and cooperation between execution and planning functions - that workers can identify with their "useful labor" in a program for self-management of the factory. In the heat of the struggle, this program gains the support of productive engineers.

## 5

With the Councils, "class consciousness" is expressed most clearly as the consciousness of "producers." The Councils do not organize the working class on the basis of a political program of struggles. The Council structure reproduces - by team, shop, and plant - the capitalist organization of labor, and "organizes" so workers along their productive role, as labor power, producers. Since the Councils assume the existing organization for the production of capital (a given combination of variable and constant capital, of workers and machines) as the basis for their socialist project, their hypothesis of a workers' democratic self-management can only prefigure the workers' management of the production of capital, that is, the workers' management of their very exploitation.

## 6

Yet the revolutionary character of all workers' struggles must always be measured in terms of their relationship to the capitalists' project. From this standpoint, it becomes clear that the organization of the Councils, by reproducing the material articulation of the labor force as it is, also freezes development at a certain level of the organic composition of capital. Therefore, it challenges capital's power to bring about whatever technological leap and reorganization of the labor force it may need. In this sense the Councils remain a revolutionary experience. As for the ideological aspect of the self-management project, the hypothesis of a workers' management of the production of capital, it also becomes clear that the "prefiguration of a more advanced level of capitalist development was the specific way in which workers refused to yield to the capitalist needs of the time, by trying to provoke the failure of capital's plan and expressing the autonomous working-class

need for conquering power." It is in the workers' refusal to be pushed into a malleable labor force under capitalist rule, and in their demand for power over the productive process (whether in the form of the Councils' "self-management" and freezes in development, or in the Bolsheviks' plan for development under "workers' control") that the fundamental political novelty of these cycles of struggle lies: on an international level, the workers' attempt to divert the direction of economic development, express autonomous goals, and assume political responsibility for managing the entire productive machine.

7

When the capitalists move to counter-attack, they are not prepared to grasp the two main givens of the cycles of struggle: the international dimension of class struggle, and the emergence of labor power as the political working class. Thus while the international unification of the working-class struggle raises the need for an international unification of capital's responses, the system of reparations imposed on Germany by the Versailles Treaty merely seals the inter-capitalist split. While confronted by the international working class, the capitalists can only perceive their national labor powers. The outcome is a strategic separation between their international and domestic responses. Internationally, world revolution appears to the capitalists as coming from "the outside," from the exemplary leadership of the USSR: hence the politics of military isolation of the Revolution in Russia. Domestically, all the capitalists know is the traditional tools of their rule: 1) the violent annihilation of the workers' political organization (the Palmer raids and the destruction of the IWW; Fascism in Italy; bloody suppression of the 'Red Army' in the Ruhr, and so forth), which breaks the ground for 2) technological manipulation of the labor force (Taylorism, the "scientific organization of labor") as a means of politically controlling class composition.

8

Taylorism, the "scientific organization of labor," the technological leap of the Twenties serves but one purpose: to destroy the specific articulation of the labor force which was the basis for the political re-composition for the working class during the first two decades of the century (Thesis 3). The introduction of the assembly line cuts through traditional cleavages in the labor force, thus producing a veritable revolution in the composition of the entire working class. The emergence of the mass worker, the human appendage to the assembly line, is the overcoming of the vanguard/mass dichotomy upon which the Bolshevik Party is modeled. The very 'aristocracy of labor' that capital created after 1870 in its attempt to control the international circulation of the Paris Commune (the very workers supposedly 'bribed' by the eight-hour work day, Saturdays off, and a high level of wages) became one of the pivots of the circulation of struggles in the Teens. Through the assembly line capital launches a direct political attack, in the form of technology, on the skills and the factory model of the Councils' professional workers. This attack brings about the material destruction of that level of organic composition which served as the basis of the self-management project. (The political unity between engineers and workers is also under attack. From Taylorism on, engineers will appear to the workers not as direct producers, but as mere functionaries of the scientific organization of exploitation; and the self-management project, devoid of its original class impact, will appear as a caricature, the



"managerial revolution" to come.

9

Thus, capital's response to the struggles follows the Nineteenth Century's "technological path to repression:" it entails breaking whatever political unification the working class has achieved during a given cycle of struggles, by means of a technological revolution in class composition. Constant manipulation of class composition through continuous technological innovations provides a tool for controlling the class "from within" through its existence as mere "labor power." The reorganization of labor is a means to the end of the "political decomposition" of the working class. Since the working class has demanded leadership over the entire society, to push it back into the factory appears as an appropriate political move. Within this strategy, factory and society are to remain divided. The specific form of the labor process in the capitalist factory (that is, the plan) has yet to be imposed on the entire society. Social anarchy is counterposed to the factory plan. The social peace and the growing mass production of the Twenties seem to prove that traditional weapons have been successful again. It will take the Depression to dissipate this belief.

10

With 1929 all the tools of the technological attack on the working class turn against capital. The economic and technological measures for containing the working class in the Twenties (re-conversion of the war economy, continuous technological change, and high productivity of labor) have pushed supply tremendously upward, while demand lags hopelessly behind. Investments decline in a spiral toward the great crash. In a very real sense, 1929 is the workers' revenge. Mass production and the assembly line, far from securing stability, have raised the old contradictions to a higher level. Capital is now paying a price for its faith in Say's Law ("supply creates its own demand"), with its separation of output and market, producers and consumers, factory and society, labor power and political class. As such it remains caught in a tragic impasse, between the inadequacy of the economic and technological tools of the past and the lack of new, political ones. It will take Roosevelt-Keynes to produce them.

11

While Hoover resumes the old search for external "international causes," Roosevelt's approach is entirely domestic: a re-distribution of income to sustain the internal demand, Keynesian strategy is already emerging - keeping up demand by allowing wages to rise and by reducing unemployment through public expenditure. The National Recovery Act of 1933 raises wage rates, encourages unionization, and so forth at the same time that it authorizes both massive investment in public works through the PWA and large relief funds. The political break with the past is enormous. In the Classical view, the flexibility of wages is the main assumption. Workers' struggles are seen as an outside interference with a self-regulating economy: labor organizations belong with other "institutional factors" that maintain wages "artificially," while it is the State's role to preserve the economy against such artificial interference. In the Keynesian model the downward rigidity of wages is the main assumption; wages are taken as independent variables. The State becomes the economic subject in charge of planning appropriate redistribution of income to support "effective demand."

12

Keynes's assumption of the downward rigidity of wages is "the most important discovery of Western Marxism" (Tronti). As wages become an independent variable, the

traditional law of the "value of labor" collapses. No "law" but only labor through its own struggles can determine the value of labor. Class antagonism is brought into the heart of production and is taken as the material given on which capital must rebuild its strategy. The NRA is precisely a political maneuver to transform class antagonism from an unpredictable element of risk and instability into a dynamic factor of development. Through its emphasis on the income effect of wages, as opposed to the mere cost effect, the New Deal chooses wages as the mainspring of growth, but within precise limits: wages must rise harmoniously with profits. The necessary control over wage dynamics requires the institutionalization of class struggle. For worker's struggles inside capital's plan means working class inside capital's State. Hence the need for the emergence of two new political figures in the Thirties: capital as the new "State-as-Planner" and the working class as organized "Labor."

## 13

The turn toward State-as-Planner is a radical break with all previous policies of State intervention. The NRA regulates the whole of industrial production. The certainty of a capitalist future has been shaken to its roots by the crisis: The NRA "codes," involving the totality of the capitalist class (95% of all industrial employers), guarantee that a future exists. As the depth of the crisis makes the State's function of 'correcting mistakes' obsolete, the State must assume the responsibility of direct investment, 'net contribution' to purchasing power. The State must expose the myth of 'sound finance' and impose budget deficits. It is no longer a juridical figure (the bourgeois government of law); it is an economic agent (the capitalist plan). All of this represents a historical watershed, the beginning of a long political process that will culminate in the 'incomes policy,' the wage-price guideposts of the New Frontier. Most important, as the representative of the collective capitalist, the State's main function is the planning of the class struggle itself. Capital's plan for development must establish an institutional hold on the working class.

## 14

Hence, the need for Labor as the political representative of the working class in the capitalist State. But the technological leap of the Twenties has entirely undermined the trade unions, by making their professional structure obsolete: by 1929, the AFL controls only 7% of the industrial labor force. By cutting through the old class composition and producing a massification of the class, Taylorism has only provided the material basis for a political re-composition at a higher level. As long as the mass worker remains unorganized he/she is entirely unpredictable. Thus with 'Section 7a' of the NRA and later with the Wagner Act the collective capitalist begins to accept the workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively. It will be no smooth process, for while capitalists as a class support the NRA, the individual capitalist will resist its consequences at the level of his own factory. The birth of the CIO will mark the victory of a thirty-year-long struggle for mass-production unionism. Capital and the mass worker will now face each other as the State-as-Planner and organized labor.

## 15

Class struggle, once the mortal enemy of capitalism to be dealt with through bloodshed, now becomes the mainspring of planner economic development. The historical development of labor power as the political working class is acknowledged by capital's plan in this major theoretical breakthrough. What was conceived as a passive fragmented object of exploitation

is now accepted as an active, unified political subject. Its needs can no longer be violently repressed; they must be satisfied, to ensure continued economic development. Previously, the working class was perceived as capital's immediate negation and the only way to extract profits was to decrease wages and increase exploitation. Now, the closed interdependence of working class and capital is made clear by the strategy of increasing wages to turn out a profit. Whereas the reduction of the working class to mere labor power was reflected in a strategic split between factory (exploitation) and society (repression) (Thesis 9), capital's political acknowledgment of the working class requires the unifying of society and factory. Capital's plan is outgrowing the factory to include society through the centralized State. This involves the development of the historical processes leading to the stage of social capital: the subordination of the individual capitalist to the collective capitalist, the subordination of all social relations to production relations, and the reduction of all forms of work to wage labor.

## 16

The signing of the NRA by the President (June 1933) marks the beginning of a new cycle of struggle. The second half of 1933 witnesses as many strikes as the whole of 1932 with three and a half times as many workers. By June 1934, with sharply reduced unemployment and a 38% growth of the total industrial payroll, the strike wave gathers momentum: 7.2% of the entire labor force (a peak not to be matched until 1937) is mobilized by the struggle. The crucial sectors are being affected - among them steel and auto workers, and West Coast longshoremen, and almost all textile workers, united behind wage, hours, and union recognition demands. 1935 is the year of both the CIO and the Wagner Act. Between the summer of 1935 and the spring of 1937, employment surpasses the 1929 level, from an index of 89.2 to 111.3. In a context of relative price stability, industrial production moves from an index of 85 to 118, and wages move from 69.1 to 110.1. The massification of the working class struggle and the economic development of capitalist recovery are two sides of one process. 1936: the struggle circulates to small factories and marginal industries while the sit-downs begin at Firestone, Goodyear, and Goodrich. 1937 is the year of 4,740 strikes the peak year in the generalization of the mass worker's struggle. In February GM capitulates; in March US Steel recognizes the Steel Workers Organizing Committee and accepts its basic demands: 10% wage increase for a 40 hour week.

## 17

The crucial aspect of the struggles throughout the New Deal is the general emergence of wages (wages, hours, unionization), the workers' share of the value produced mutually acknowledged by both capitalists and workers as the battlefield for the new stage of class struggle. For capitalists wages are a means of sustaining development, while for the workers they represent the weapon that re-launches class offensive. It is precisely this contradictory political nature of wages (the means of workers' "integration" on one hand, and the basis for the class's political re-composition and attack on profit on the other) that causes Roosevelt's failure to ensure steady growth while at the same time maintaining control of the working class. To the threatening massification of struggles, big business responds with an economic recession, a refusal to invest, a "political strike of capital."

## 18

The economic recession of 1937-38 is the first example of capital's use of the crisis

as a means of regaining initia-

tive in the class struggle. Inflation, unemployment, and wage cuts are weapons that break the workers' offensive and are means for a new political de-composition of the working class. The political necessity of the economic crisis shows dramatically that the Keynesian model is not sufficient to guarantee stability; only through an act of open violence can capital re-establish its domination over workers. Yet, it is only with the introduction of crises as a means of controlling the class that the Keynesian model can show its true value. While in 1933 the use of class struggle as the propelling element of capitalist development was the only alternative to economic recession, five years later, with the "Roosevelt recession," "crisis" is revealed as the alternative face of "development." Development and crisis become the two poles of one cycle. The "State-as-Crisis" is thus simply a moment of the "State-as-Planner" - planner of crisis as a pre-condition for a new development. From now on, capital's crises will no longer be "natural," uncontrollable events, but the result of a political decision, essential moments of actual "political business cycles." (Kalecki)

## 19

The political figure which dominates the class struggle from the 1930s on is the mass worker. The technological leap of the Twenties has produced both the economic recession of 1929 and the political subject of class struggle in the Thirties (Thesis 8). The "scientific organization" of mass production necessitates a malleable, highly interchangeable labor force, easily movable from one productive sector to another and easily adjustable to each new level of capital's organic composition. By 1926, 43% of the workers at Ford require only one day for their training, while 36% require less than a week. The fragmentation and simplification of the work process undermine the static relationship between worker and job, disconnecting wage labor from "useful labor" entirely. With the mass worker, "abstract labor" reaches its fullest historical development.: the intellectual abstraction of Capital is revealed as worker's sensuous activity.

## 20

From the plant to the university, society becomes an immense assembly line, where the seeming variety of jobs disguises the actual generalization of the same abstract labor. This is neither the emergence of a "new working class" nor the massification of a classless "middle class," but a widening of the material articulation of the working class proper. (In the process, however, lies the basis for much ideology. Since all forms of work are subsumed under capital's production, industrial production seems to play less and less of a role, and the factory seems to disappear. Thus, what is in fact an increasing process of proletarianization - the main accumulation of capital being the accumulation of labor power itself - is misrepresented as a process of tertiarization, in which the class dissolves into the abstract "People.!" Hence the peculiar inversion whereby the notions of "class" and "proletariat" appear as "abstractions," while "the people" becomes concrete.)

## 21

From the worker's viewpoint, interchangeability, mobility, and massification turn into positive factors. They undermine all divisions by productive role and sector. They provide the material basis for the political re-cOmposition of the entire working class. By destroying the in

individual worker's pride in his or her skills, they liberate workers as a class from an identification with their role as productive labor power. From the workers' standpoint, wages cannot be a reward for productivity and work, but are instead the fruits of their struggles. They cannot be a function of capital's need for development, they must be an expression of the autonomous needs of the class. In the heat of the struggle, the true separation, between labor power and working class, reaches its most threatening revolutionary peak. "It is quite precisely the separation of the working class from itself, from itself as wage labor, and hence from capital. It is the separation of its political strength from its existence as an economic category." (Tronti, Operai e Capitale).

individual worker's pride in his or her skills, they liberate workers as a class from an identification with their role as producers. With the political demand of "more money and less work" the increasing alienation of labor becomes a progressive disengagement of the political struggles of the working class from its economic existence as mere labor power. From the workers' viewpoint, wages cannot be a reward for productivity and work, but are instead the fruits of their struggles. They cannot be a function of capital's need for development, they must be an expression of the autonomous needs of the class. In the heat of the struggle, the true separation between labor power and the working class reaches its most threatening revolutionary peak. "It is quite precisely the separation of the working class from itself, from itself as wage labor, and hence from capital. It is the separation of its political strength from its existence as an economic category." (Tronti).

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